

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Health May 4, 1991

President Bush is relaxed, comfortable, and having dinner with Mrs. Bush in his room at Bethesda Naval Hospital this evening. He is in good spirits and the doctors' reports are very positive.

President Bush developed atrial fibrillation, which is an irregularity of the heartbeat, while running at Camp David this afternoon about 4:20 p.m. This condition presented itself as unusual fatigue during the run. The President was evaluated by Dr. Michael Nash at Camp David, who detected the irregular heartbeat and found him to be entirely stable with no other symptoms.

The President, accompanied by Mrs. Bush and Dr. Nash, flew by helicopter to Bethesda Naval Hospital, arriving about 5:58 p.m. this evening. At the time of hospital admission, the irregular heartbeat was still present, but the President was completely alert and entirely stable, with no complaints. The President walked into the hospital on his own power.

An electrocardiogram showed no abnormalities except the irregular heart rhythm. An ultrasound examination of the heart showed no structural abnormalities and nor-

mal heart function.

The President is undergoing treatment for atrial fibrillation with the drug digoxin. Diagnostic testing and initial treatment took approximately 1 hour. The President has been consulting with Governor Sununu on various issues at the hospital. The President will remain there for observation over the night.

Physicians in attendance are Dr. Lawrence Mohr, colonel of the U.S. Army; Dr. Michael Nash, major, U.S. Air Force, of the White House Medical Unit; and Dr. John A. Williams III, Lt. commander, U.S. Navy, a staff cardiologist at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Mrs. Bush will remain with the President at the hospital overnight. Vice President Quayle spoke with the President by telephone about 7:20 p.m. and found him in excellent spirits.

Note: The Press Secretary read the statement to reporters at 8:30 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. John H. Sununu was Chief of Staff to the President. Later in the week, the President was diagnosed as having Graves' disease.

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The President spent a comfortable night, sleeping well. He awoke at 6 a.m., did paperwork, and spoke with Governor Sununu by phone.

The President is in great spirits, but still has atrial fibrillation. There are no signs of heart damage and no evidence of a heart attack. The President has no other symptoms and feels completely normal. This is corroborated by the blood and x-ray tests which were examined this morning.

The President continues to take digoxin for the atrial fibrillation. This is now being supplemented by the drug procainamide,

which is a normal procedure in such cases. The President will remain at the naval hospital today for observation on the drugs.

The President's Physician, Dr. Burton Lee, is supervising the team of physicians who are attending to the President. Dr. Bruce K. Lloyd, captain, U.S. Navy, chief of cardiology at the naval hospital, is directing the President's care. Dr. Allan Ross, chief of cardiology at George Washington University Hospital, is consulting on the President's case.

Mrs. Bush spent the night at the hospital and departed for the White House a little